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**CASE REPORT****Negative Impact of Troublesome Peer Interactions and Authoritarian Parenting Style on Academic Performance of a 15 year Old Boy***Samruddhi Karnik<sup>1</sup> and Neha Sahasrabudhe<sup>2</sup>**B.K.L Walawalkar Rural Medical College and Hospital, Sawarde, Tal-Chiplun, Dist-Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, India<sup>2</sup>*

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**Case Report:****Abstract:**

Adolescence is a period of great turbulence characterized by cognitive, emotional, social and physical changes. Family environment and role of peers is extremely crucial in the development of an adolescent. Presenting here is a brief case of 15 year old boy who was referred for counseling by his parents for lack of concentration in studies. In the counseling sessions with the boy and his parents it was found that the boy was psychologically disturbed as he was teased at school by his peers. In addition his father had an authoritarian parenting style which was adding to his troubles resulting in low academic scores. The boy's scores on "The Study Habits Inventory" were lower, indicating poor study habits which includes study concentration. The counsellors used an eclectic approach for the boy and his parents, to develop a healthy family environment, which improved his self-esteem and study habits.

**Keywords:**

Parenting style, Peer interactions, Academic performance, Eclectic counseling, Therapies.

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**Address for correspondence:**

Samruddhi Karnik , B.K.L Walawalkar Rural Medical College and Hospital, Sawarde, Tal-Chiplun, Dist-Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, India, E-mail: samruddhi.s.karnik@gmail.com, Mobile No:9765245329  
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### **Introduction:**

In India, adolescents account for nearly one quarter of the total population. They deserve our attention as they hold the key to breaking cycles of poverty & inequity.<sup>(1)</sup> Recent researches suggest that more young people are beginning to report of mental health problems. Indian Council of Medical Research reported that about 12.8 per cent of children (1-16 years) suffer from mental health problems. The children and adolescents living in rural konkan region can be counted in disadvantaged communities who face multiple stressors like family poverty, family conflict and increased prevalence of deviant peers. Also male members in majority of the families have migrated to Mumbai due to low employment potentials in the konkan region. All these factors add up to the troubles of the children living in this area. Educational backwardness and superstitious beliefs, are some of the reasons of an authoritarian parenting style of most of the parents living in this region. Thus objective of this case study was to know the negative effects of such a family environment on the well being of an adolescent and how troublesome peer interactions can also affect adversely on the academic performance.

### **Case report:**

A 15 years old boy was referred for counselling. The parents had come to the counsellors to talk about their son. Their socio-economic status was middle class. Their presenting complaint was that he was always distracted and not able to concentrate on his studies. He was in 10<sup>th</sup> standard and thus his parents were tensed. They informed the counsellors that he had recently failed in his Maths exam. He used to previously play football and was good at the game but because of his declining academic performance, parents had stopped his football practice. The parents also informed about the boy's anger and irritated behaviour when asked about studies.

The counsellors took semi structured interviews of the boy's mother, father, and friends to gather information about the client. After a brief discussion with the parents, the counsellors found out that the boy was teased on his skin tone by his peers in school (especially girls), which was affecting his concentration in studies and might have led to his anger and irritable behaviour. Father complained that he spent his time at home playing games on the mobile. His father was

of the opinion that he should play outdoor games like 'kabbaddi', 'cricket' etc and make new friends.

The counsellors then took an individual session with the boy. He informed the counsellors about his failure in Maths and said that it was hard for him to remember the steps of a sum but his performance in other subjects was average. After gathering information about his study timings, place of study, time given to a particular subject and his way of studying, "The Study Habits Inventory" was administered to him who showed that his study methods were not appropriate. When asked about his leisure time he said that he mostly played mobile games as none of his friends were available to play outdoor games. Most of them had tuitions and others went for football practice. This could have led to his distraction from studies as he loved to play football.

The counsellors noticed a lack of self esteem in him due to the teasing at school especially by girls. In adolescent age, anything said by the members of the opposite sex is taken seriously and thus he used to get agitated and frequent quarrels used to take place.

After asking some questions about his family environment, it was seen that the boy's father had an Authoritarian parenting style (strict parenting) because of which he was scared of his father and there was a total lack of communication in them. The boy failed to verbalise his views and emotions and sometimes also had quarrels with the father which led to punishment. His relationship with his mother was cordial. Thus all these factors contributed to a negative impact on his studies and self-confidence <sup>(2)</sup>.

#### **Methodology:**

Semi structured interviews of the mother, father, child, and friends were conducted. The eclectic approach of therapy was used. This approach incorporates a variety of therapeutic principles and range of techniques from all schools of therapy in order to create the ideal treatment program to meet the specific needs of the patient or client. Thus techniques from therapies like Reality Therapy, Transactional Analysis and Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy were used in the counselling sessions. The study skills were given to the boy who focused on reading, improving concentration, note taking, memory techniques and time management.

**Discussion:**

Content analysis of the semi structured interviews indicated that troublesome peer interactions and the father's authoritarian parenting style was affecting negatively on the boy's academics. The boy's mother also confirmed the father's authoritarian parenting style and his peers confirmed teasing him. Thus he could not concentrate on his studies and this adversely affected his self-esteem. The boy and his parents were given separate counselling sessions. The study skills were given to the boy who focused on reading, increasing concentration, note taking, memory techniques and time management to improve his academics. With the help of reality therapy<sup>(3)</sup> he was motivated to study and also with the help of choice theory he was counselled about the individualistic difference and that everyone is unique and has some abilities. Thus it does not matter whether you are fair or dark. It's the capabilities you have and your hard work that help to make you successful in life. The boy after the sessions realised the importance of academics in achieving the dreams and agreed to study hard and use all the study skills given by the counsellors. It was noted that he had started working as he had completed all the homework and the

memory exercises given to him. Also he started ignoring his peers when the counsellors made him understand the axioms of choice theory.

In the session with parents, the father was told about the long term effects of his strict parenting<sup>(4)</sup> and was made to realise that because of his strictness and ways of punishment his relation with the son is getting largely hampered. Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy<sup>(3)</sup> was used and cognitive dispute was done to correct his faulty beliefs about parenting. Also with the help of Transactional Analysis<sup>(3)</sup> he was informed about the ego states to improve the father-son communication. Over the sessions the father agreed and accepted his mistakes. He took all the efforts to improve his relation with his son to make it friendly and benevolent.

This shows how authoritarian parenting style can affect the academics and emotional stability of an adolescent in a negative way<sup>(5)</sup>. Also peer group acceptance plays an important role because adolescents spend a lot of time with peers and their advice and acceptance is more important for them.

**Conclusion:**

Counselling sessions were given to the parents and the boy over a month.

Psychotherapeutic counselling gave positive results for both parents and the boy as it aided to enhance their family environment and the father-son relationship. It also helped to improve the boy's peer group interactions. The use of study skills reformed the boy's study habits and his overall level of concentration increased. In India, the awareness about the need and importance of counselling is quite low. Further in the konkan region, there is hardly any awareness about psychological health and thus counselling is a herculean task here. Considering the positive effects of counselling, it can be said that it is of utmost importance in the rural konkan area. More and more awareness should be raised on mental health among adolescents, parents and teachers so that the children and adolescents living in this region prosper in all aspects of their life.

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